

The Great Controversy

Earth's Closing Events

Lesson #12 for June 22, 2024

Scriptures: John 8:32; Ezekiel 20:12,20; Revelation 7:1-2; 14:1; 18:1-4; Joel 2:21-24; Hosea 6:3; James 5:7-8; Proverbs 23:23.

1. How much do we know about the final closing events in this world's history? Are we adequately preparing ourselves for what is coming?

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] Suppose you had a daughter driving home from college for summer vacation. As you wait for her to arrive, you anxiously monitor the weather reports. You become worried as the weather rapidly deteriorates. Storm clouds loom on the horizon. Winds blow fiercely. The heavens open and rain pours down. Trees are blown over. Soon the main road home is impassable. Then you hear from one of your neighbors that it is possible to get through on a secondary road. Cars can navigate around some downed tree limbs. Although communication is difficult, you are able to get a text message to your daughter, carefully detailing how she can get home safely.

More than anything else, Jesus wants to take us through the storms of life and get us home. Ellen G. White writes, "A storm is coming, relentless in its fury. Are we prepared to meet it?"— *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 315. The purpose of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ministry in heaven's sanctuary is to ensure that we get home. The prophetic messages of Daniel and Revelation are divine instructions, especially for an end-time people, to help us through life's storms so that one day we can feel the warm embrace of a loving Savior.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide for Sabbath Afternoon, June 15.^{†§} [Was the main purpose of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ministry to save us as stated in the Bible study guide? Or, was it to secure the entire universe?][‡]**

2. How important is the truth to you? How do you determine what is truth?

Proverbs 23:23: Truth, wisdom, learning, and good sense—these are worth paying for, but too valuable for you to sell.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Proverbs 23:23). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].^{†‡}

John 8:32: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."—*Good News Bible*.*

John 17:17: "Dedicate them to yourself by means of the truth; your word is truth."—*Good News Bible*.*

3. We know that Satan is a liar and that he has accused God of being a liar. Satan has become very successful at deceit and lying. By contrast, **God always tells the truth.** He refuses to lie.
4. Notice these contrasting views of the Devil and of Jesus.

John 8:44: "You are the children of your father, **the Devil**, and you want to follow your father's desires. From the very beginning he was a murderer and has never been on the side of truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie,

he is only doing what is natural to him, because **he is a liar and the father of all lies.**—*Good News Bible*.*†

John 14:6: Jesus answered him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Psalms 119:105: Your word is a lamp to guide me
and a light for my path.—*Good News Bible*.*

5. The truth is going to be particularly important to those who live through the final events of this world’s history. Are we able to distinguish between the deceptions of Satan and the truth as presented in God’s Word?

2 Peter 1:16-21: ¹⁶ We have not depended on made-up stories in making known to you the mighty coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. With our own eyes we saw his greatness. ¹⁷We were there when he was given honour [*sic-Br*] and glory by God the Father, when the voice came to him from the Supreme Glory, saying, “This is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased!” ¹⁸We ourselves heard this voice coming from heaven, when we were with him on the holy mountain.

¹⁹ So we are even more confident of the message proclaimed by the prophets. You will do well to pay attention to it, because it is like a lamp shining in a dark place until the Day dawns and the light of the morning star shines in your hearts.

²⁰Above all else, however, remember that no one can explain by himself or herself a prophecy in the Scriptures. ²¹For no prophetic message ever came just from human will, but people were under the control of the Holy Spirit as they spoke the message that came from God.—*Good News Bible*.*‡

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] The people of God are directed to the Scriptures as their safeguard against the influence of false teachers and the delusive power of spirits of darkness. Satan employs every possible device to prevent men from obtaining a knowledge of the Bible; for its plain utterances reveal his deceptions.... The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. **So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures....**

None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict. To every soul will come the searching test: Shall I obey God rather than men? The decisive hour is even now at hand. Are our feet planted on the rock of God’s immutable word? Are we prepared to stand firm in defense of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus?—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 593.1-594.0.†‡

6. What do we need to do to prepare ourselves to stand firmly during those final, very troublesome times? Are we prepared to go to jail? Are we prepared to have our lives threatened? Or, even taken?

7. The entire world is going to turn against us. Do not be surprised! No wonder God has told us in the New Testament:

Revelation 14:12: This calls for endurance on the part of God’s people, those who obey God’s commandments and are faithful to Jesus.—*Good News Bible*.*

Ephesians 4:30: And do not make God's Holy Spirit sad; for the Spirit is God's mark of ownership on you, a guarantee that the Day will come when God will set you free.—*Good News Bible*.*

8. **We know that the signal issue at the end will be: Whom do we worship? That will be represented by what day of the week upon which we worship: Sabbath or Sunday.**
9. Marks shall be placed on God's faithful people and also on the Devil's people: The seal of God on God's people, and the mark of the beast on the Devil's people. Will we be able to see those marks? No! But, God's angels will be able to see them.
10. Revelation tells us that there will be a group, symbolically known as the 144,000, who will stand firmly through the final events.
11. Notice these references:

Revelation 7:1-2: ¹ After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds so that no wind should blow on the earth or the sea or against any tree. ²And I saw another angel coming up from the east with the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels to whom God had given the power to damage the earth and the sea.—*Good News Bible*.*

Revelation 14:1: Then I looked, and there was the Lamb standing on Mount Zion; with him were 144,000 people who have **his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads**.—*Good News Bible*.*†

Revelation 13:16-17: ¹⁶The beast forced all the people, small and great, rich and poor, slave and free, to have a mark placed **on their right hands or on their foreheads**. ¹⁷No one could buy or sell without having this mark, that is, the beast's name or the number that stands for the name.—*Good News Bible*.*†

12. It is important to notice that **the seal of God is placed only on the forehead. Only those who are fully committed and loyal to God will have that seal of God placed on them. The mark of the beast will be placed on the forehead, symbolizing those who are committed to the Devil; but, it will also be placed on the hands of those who are just going along because it is easier.**
13. How can we know for sure if we have received one or the other of those marks? Revelation 13 tells us the Devil's side; Revelation 14 shows us God's response.
14. Could it really be true that almost the whole world will be worshiping the beast and the Devil who stands behind the beast? How is that possible? Will that include not only apostate Christians but also communists and Muslims and Hindus and people of other religions?
15. Satan knows that these final events in the world's history will be either triumph or "curtains" for him. While he would never admit it, deep down in his heart he knows that he is going to be defeated. Satan's hope is that God will leave him on this earth to rule over all those who are his followers while the rest of the universe is ruled by God. Of course, we know that, ultimately, God will bring His government to this earth and rule from here. Satan will have no chance of being a part of that!

[BSG:] **Creation is the basis of true worship (Rev. 4:11).** Since God "created all things through Jesus Christ" (*Eph. 3:9, NKJV*), Satan hates the Creator and

has attempted, through earthly powers, to change the Sabbath, the memorial of Creation (*Dan. 7:25*). **The coming conflict over the law of God focuses on authority. If Satan can eradicate Sabbath worship, he will declare that his authority is greater than God's authority. To accomplish this, Satan will attempt to convince or coerce the entire world to accept a counterfeit Sabbath.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, June 18.^{†§}

16. Nearly 2500 years ago, Daniel warned us in Daniel 7:25 that the Devil would seek to change God's laws.
17. It may seem impossible—to some living in the Western world particularly—that worship of Satan could permeate the entire world. But, we know that this world can change quickly. Look what happened with COVID-19.
18. So, what will Satan do to threaten those who refuse to accept his mark?

Revelation 13:13-17: ¹³This second beast performed great miracles; it made fire come down out of heaven to earth in the sight of everyone. ¹⁴And it deceived all the people living on earth by means of the miracles which it was allowed to perform in the presence of the first beast. The beast told them to build an image in honour [*sic-Br*] of the beast that had been wounded by the sword and yet lived. ¹⁵**The second beast was allowed to breathe life into the image of the first beast, so that the image could talk and put to death all those who would not worship it.** ¹⁶The beast forced all the people, small and great, rich and poor, slave and free, to have a mark placed on their right hands or on their foreheads. ¹⁷**No one could buy or sell without having this mark,** that is, the beast's name or the number that stands for the name.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡}

19. Satan will not only threaten to kill us; but also, he will try to make it impossible for us to buy or sell or conduct business in any way.
20. While Satan is quickly trying to organize the whole world on his side, God is not sleeping. The Holy Spirit will pour out the "latter rain." It will be even greater than the "former rain" at Pentecost.

Acts 2:1-4,41-47: ¹ When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place. ²Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. ⁴**They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak...**

⁴¹Many of them believed his message and were baptized, and about 3,000 people were added to the group that day. ⁴²They spent their time in learning from the apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and the prayers.

[Life among the Believers]

⁴³ Many miracles and wonders were being done through the apostles, and everyone was filled with awe. ⁴⁴All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. ⁴⁵They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all, according to

what each one needed. ⁴⁶Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, ⁴⁷praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

21. We know about the marvelous response to Peter’s sermon at Pentecost. What events led to these results? It was not just Peter’s sermon!

Acts 4:4: But many who heard the message believed; and the number of men grew to about 5,000.—*Good News Bible*.*

Acts 6:7: And so the word of God continued to spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem grew larger and larger, and a great number of priests [Sadducees] accepted the faith.—*Good News Bible*.*†

22. We should note also that many Pharisees became Christians. (See Acts 15:5.)

23. We know that the preaching and life of John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah the first time. Malachi 4 suggests that a group of people will prepare the way for the second coming of Christ. **Could we be those people?**

24. We know that persecution came to the disciples and the apostles in a fierce way after the stoning of Stephen. Due to the persecution, the believers were scattered from being just in Jerusalem; and everywhere they went, they carried the gospel.

25. **It is important for us to remember under those circumstances, that it is not our job to spread the gospel. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. We are just “cooperators.”**

[EGW:] As the “former rain” was given, in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the opening of the gospel, to cause the upspringing of the precious seed, so the “latter rain” will be given at its close for the ripening of the harvest.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 611.2.‡

Revelation 18:1-4: ¹After this I saw another angel coming down out of heaven. He had great authority, and his splendour [sic-Br] brightened the whole earth. ²He cried out in a loud voice: “She has fallen! Great Babylon has fallen! She is now haunted by demons and unclean spirits; all kinds of filthy and hateful birds live in her. ³For all the nations have drunk her wine — the strong wine of her immoral lust. The kings of the earth practiced sexual immorality with her, and the merchants of the world grew rich from her unrestrained lust.”

⁴ Then I heard another voice from heaven, saying:

“Come out, my people! Come out from her!

You must not take part in her sins;

you must not share in her punishment!”—*Good News Bible*.*†

Habakkuk 2:14: But the earth will be as full of the knowledge of the LORD’s glory as the seas are full of water.—*Good News Bible*.*

Matthew 24:14: And **this Good News about the Kingdom will be preached through all the world for a witness to all nations; and then the end will come.**—*Good News Bible*.*†

26. Notice that in Revelation 18, the angel has great authority. What is that authority based upon?

Matthew 10:1: Jesus called his twelve disciples together and **gave them authority** to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and every sickness.—*Good News Bible*.*†

Matthew 28:18-19: ¹⁸Jesus drew near and said to them, **“I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.”** ¹⁹Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

27. **Empowered by the Holy Spirit, that small group of Jesus’s disciples managed to spread the gospel to the then-known western world!**

[EGW:] The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. The prophecies which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the former rain at the opening of the gospel are again to be fulfilled in the latter rain at its close. Here are “the times of refreshing” to which the apostle Peter looked forward when he said: “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus.” Acts 3:19, 20.

Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works, with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand.

The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. The arguments have been presented. **The seed has been sown, and now it will spring up and bear fruit.** The publications distributed by missionary workers have exerted their influence, yet many whose minds were impressed have been prevented from fully comprehending the truth or from yielding obedience. Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. **Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord’s side.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 611.3-612.2.*†

28. For people who have been born and raised in the United States, it might seem very difficult to realize that the right guaranteed in the First Amendment can be set aside and that Protestant groups will eventually be able to force the United States government to enforce their beliefs and their ideas. As early as 1851, adventists recognized that the second beast of Revelation 13 must refer to the United States of America. Today, the United States is arguably the most powerful nation in the world.

29. Notice these comments about how it will play out.

[EGW:] All who refuse compliance [in observing the false sabbath] will be visited with civil penalties, and it will finally be declared that they are deserving of death. On the other hand, the law of God enjoining the Creator's rest day demands obedience and threatens wrath against all who transgress its precepts.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 604.2.‡

[EGW:] **As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren. When Sabbathkeepers are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, these apostates are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 608.2.†‡

30. There are several very important points for us to remember in these final events: (1) **The Bible, the Word of God, is the only infallible guide.** (2) **Sabbathkeeping will be the sign of our commitment to our Creator and Savior.** (3) We are never going to be left alone. It might seem like we will be left alone; however, **the Holy Spirit will always be with us.** And while things may seem terrible, the latter rain will be poured out.
31. Notice this story from the Bible study guide of God helping his children.

[BSG:] **Be Faithful: God Will Have the Last Word**

Ian was born and raised in a faithful Adventist family in the Soviet Union. Though his family was poor and was forced to work hard, he had a carefree and happy childhood and youth. At the age of 18, Ian was drafted to serve in the Soviet army. With other conscripts, he boarded a train and, seven days later, found himself 1,865 miles (3,000 kilometers) away from home. Thus, his long, two-year military term started. Apart from feeling lonely and homesick, Ian knew his biggest challenge was yet ahead. Even before being drafted, he had decided in his heart that he would remain loyal to God and keep the Sabbath, irrespective of what might happen to him. The first couple of Sabbaths he explained to his immediate superiors that he could not work on the Sabbath because of his religious convictions. The commanders tolerated him for those first few Saturdays, thinking that he would soon give up his strange, “provincial,” and “primitive” customs.

Soon, however, Ian's commanders realized the young man was serious, and they took decisive disciplinary and “educational” measures. One Friday afternoon, after an exhausting workday, they told Ian he did not deserve to sleep on a comfortable bed on the weekend if he refused to work Sabbaths. Instead, they informed him he would spend the weekend in the temporary detention center. When Ian and his commanders reached the jail, the officers

discovered the jail was locked and the warden had gone somewhere else. As they waited for the warden to return, the officers chatted while Ian watched the sun set on the beautiful Lake Balkhash. Silently, Ian sought reassurance and support from God. Suddenly, a sergeant who was passing by stopped and casually asked Ian's superiors who they brought to jail.

"A Sabbath keeper," they replied. "We want to re-educate him to obey orders and to work on Saturdays."

"Never!" exclaimed the sergeant, "I know these people. They would rather die than work on Sabbaths!"

The officers realized they made a mistake by allowing the sergeant to speak in Ian's hearing. But it was too late. Ian received his much-needed dose of encouragement.

The warden arrived, and just as the Sabbath commenced, he escorted Ian into the jail: a 6.5x10-foot (2x3-meter) room, packed with more than ten other soldiers, most of whom were smoking. The heavy metal door closed, and Ian occupied the only available spot by the entrance, prepared to stand or sit the rest of the weekend. The young soldier of Christ was determined to remain faithful to God's Sabbath. Minutes became hours, and by midnight, Ian began to imagine how the brethren back in his hometown were happily walking to church to worship God during vespers while he remained locked up in a dark jail cell, filled with cigarette smoke, with two more days to go.

Suddenly, Ian remembered the last sermon he heard in his church before leaving for military service; it was about the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel and how he prayed seven times for rain. What if I also pray seven times? thought Ian to himself. Though it seemed almost a presumption, Ian decided to give it a try. He uttered the first simple prayer in his heart. Nothing happened. His second prayer followed. Still, no "cloud." Third prayer. Then fourth. Fifth. And sixth. Then finally, he uttered in his heart the seventh prayer. Total midnight silence reigned after he finished. The silence did nothing to change Ian's resolve or faith. He was ready to be loyal to God, even if God would not answer his seven prayers in any apparent way. At least, he thought to himself, I tried, right?

However, just a minute later, the silence was broken by footsteps outside the jail. The steps were followed by clinking keys, then by the squeaking of the door as it was opened. The warden appeared in the doorway and searched the room with his flashlight. When the warden spotted Ian, he commanded him to step outside. Once outside, the supervisor took Ian to his office, improvised a simple but comfortable bed, and invited the youth to sleep. Ian collapsed and was asleep in a moment. In the morning, Ian awoke to another surprise: the supervisor brought him breakfast. Even more, the warden gave Ian a bundle with food and conducted him to the shore of the lake where he set him free to enjoy the Sabbath in nature.

Ian spent the following several Sabbaths in the same way. The officers would bring him to the jail for the weekends. The warden would free Ian and feed him for the rest of the weekend. Then on Monday morning, Ian would return to his

barracks. The following months and years were replete with many other similar experiences of God's miraculous interventions on his behalf. After two years, Ian returned home a mature, strong young man, faithful to God. Yes, he went against the behemoth of the Soviet army, which had sought to crush his faith. Yes, his officers had told him he was not worthy to sleep on the army's mattresses, but God had the last word. God cares for His faithful people, who make the decision—as Daniel did in the Bible and as Ian did—to remain loyal to Him.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for 158-160.‡

32. Upon what is our loyalty to God based?

[BSG:] Loyalty has always fascinated the students of human nature and history. As a behavioral attitude, loyalty has its basis in various things. Some of these bases are biological or predetermined, such as one's family or the place of one's birth. Personal decisions form another basis for loyalty. These decisions may be related to various things, such as monetary benefits (payment, rewards), convictions or worldviews, and morality. Some people base their loyalty on duty, others on preference, and still others on utility. The objects of loyalty are related to these bases. People show their devotion to their families, tribes, nations, religions, ideologies, philosophies, nature, and businesses, to name just a few allegiances. But what is Christian loyalty? Why are Christians loyal, and to whom are they loyal?—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 160.‡

33. Think of **the story of Job** to answer the last question in the Bible study guide regarding why Christians are loyal.

Job 1:8-12: ⁸ “Did you notice my servant Job?” the LORD asked. “There is no one on earth as faithful and good as he is. He worships me and is careful not to do anything evil.”

⁹ Satan replied, “Would Job worship you if he got nothing out of it? ¹⁰You have always protected him and his family and everything he owns. You bless everything he does, and you have given him enough cattle to fill the whole country. ¹¹But now suppose you take away everything he has — he will curse you to your face!”

¹² “All right,” the LORD said to Satan, “everything he has is in your power, but you must not hurt Job himself.” So Satan left.—*Good News Bible.**

34. Job became a faithful friend of God at a time when there was no Bible, no church, no Sabbath School, not even a pastor or prophet to give guidance. Despite all the evils that Satan could throw at him, Job remained faithful. God's judgment or evaluation of Job proved to be correct! And Satan was resoundingly defeated. A group of people living at the end of this world's history will have to repeat Job's experience. They will be “the 144,000.” Are we ready?

35. Things may look very bad, but we can rely upon God.

Habbakkuk 3:17-18: ¹⁷ Even if the fig tree does not blossom,
And there is no fruit on the vines,
If the yield of the olive fails,
And the fields produce no food,

*Even if the flock disappears from the fold,
And there are no cattle in the stalls,
Yet I will triumph in the LORD,
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.—New American Standard Bible.*§*

[BSG:] Ian's story [recounted above] is, truly, an amazing and encouraging one. But we also know that for every account like that, there are many others whose faithfulness brought calamity and suffering upon them and, perhaps, their loved ones. How do we understand stories like that?...

While we may imagine how we will stand firm and venerate God's Sabbath during times of persecution, how many times do we fail to maintain the sacredness and the solemnity of the Sabbath during times of peace and prosperity? Sometimes, we may find ourselves wondering whether it isn't easier to betray the Lord of the Sabbath during times of freedom than during times of persecution. If we cannot keep the Sabbath holy when we have all the freedom to do so, how can we expect to be faithful to the Sabbath in times of turbulence and pressure? **Create a strategy for being faithful to God's Sabbath, during both good times and bad times.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 162.†‡

36. Are we preparing for what is coming?

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